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ABSTRACT

This book is about language prejudice as experienced by Puerto Ricans in the mainland United States. Prejudice is expressed as social signs that include, but go well beyond, language. When people express linguistic prejudices, they generally start by objectifying the languages in question as though the languages were sharply defined. For Puerto Ricans in the United States, English is the more valued language, Spanish, the less valued. Most Puerto Ricans living in the United States speak English, but they are told that it is inferior English, as if English were a clearly defined object. The object of this inquiry is the indexical dynamic that sustains language prejudice, its structural source, and its enactment in daily routines as expressed in interviews. Chapter 1 shows that race and ethnicity are competing categories of origins difference, and that difference in language of origin is only occasionally safe in the United States. Chapter 2 explores the ways in which Puerto Ricans and their language came to be racialized in the United States. Chapter 3 explores functions of English and Spanish, and Chapter 4 considers how people perceive English correctness as it affects their lives. Chapter 5, based on interviews, explores the connections people find among race, language, and class. An appendix describes some sample speakers and gives some speech samples. (Contains 158 references.) (SLD)

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